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ABSTRACT

Described is an on-going 1970-71 urban early childhood education project serving 120 pre-kindergarten and 120 kindergarten culturally disadvantaged children in Paterson, New Jersey. Discussed are the program rationale based on the importance of preschool experience and the need for a model demonstration project. Purposes of the special project are given to include training staff in development and use of materials and improving the academic performance and capabilities of disadvantaged students. Specific purposes of the project year are listed, among which are producing an assessment system (performance objectives) and defining the cognitive, physical, and behavioral needs of project students. Provided are definitions of terms such as culturally disadvantaged and Title III. Reported in detail are the results of pretest assessment in the areas of cognitive skills and basic knowledge of the 120 pre-kindergarten children which led to identification of deficiencies such as the limited standard English vocabulary of 79% of the children, and the inability to give their names of 61% of the children (2 months later only 4% of the children were unable to give their names). (DB)

DALE AVENUE SCHOOL

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY

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RESEARCH BULLETIN VOLUME I NO.2
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The Dale Avenue Tour Guides

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DALE AVENUE URBAN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROJECT -1970-71

RATIONALE

The school population of inner city Paterson, New Jersey is composed of children from varied ethnic and racial backgrounds, many of whom are culturally disadvantaged and have difficulty coping with traditional school demands.

Culturally disadvantaged children lack early experiences of an educationally stimulating nature. The most striking feature of the inner city culturally disadvantaged is that families are poor. Their average yearly incomes are generally around $5,000. Many children come from broken homes and live in densely populated areas where housing is substandard.

The children live in a world that is dominantly physical rather than ideationally and verbally controlled. When they enter school, they are often two years behind in standard English vocabulary skills.

Attitudes conducive to school achievement, motivation, persistence, delay of gratification, interest in school and life activities, are not as well developed as are those of middle-class children. Although the disadvantaged children come to school with a highly developed language, it is not the standard English of the school. Consequently alert children who seem to be within the normal range of intelligence score with a mean I.Q. of around 86 rather than the standard norm of 100.

Because many of the disadvantaged children in Paterson schools fall years behind their grade level in reading and language, they have frustrating experiences in all of the subject areas. The result is failure, discouragement and ultimately a high drop-out rate. The city and country are then the recipients of a large core of untrained, uneducated young adults.

Many authorities have indicated the importance of pre-school experience, particularly for children from lower socio-economic groups because, hopefully, children are more responsive to acquiring basic skills at pre and early school age. These skills can be fostered with reasonable readiness and their acquisition can thus help lay the basis for a reduction in school failure. The skills involved include visual and auditory perception, language abilities (standard English), spatial and temporal orientation, general information, familiarity with books, toys and games and a development of a sustained curiosity.

THE PROBLEM

The Dale Avenue School, which opened it's doors officially in February, 1969, was established by the Paterson Board of Education to fulfill the need to provide a center (pre-kindergarten through third grade), which could (1) develop a setting and curriculum to enrich every child's experience and to help disadvantaged children develop cognitive skills at rates that will enable them to cope appropriately with the kinds of things the American Society demands intellectually; (2) to serve as a model for demonstration of activities, teaching techniques and ma-

Food For Thought

terials that prove to be successful at Dale; (3) provide effective feedback to Paterson schools so that they could benefit from the research data accumulated at Dale; (4) provide a setting in which the positive values of the various cultures are developed; (5) develop an evaluative base and assess the psychological, biological, sociological and educational progress of children; and (6) develop a teacher-parent-community-child oriented program which emphasizes the involvement of all in the educational activities of the child.

It became apparent, soon after the Dale Avenue School opened, that additional personnel were required to assess the needs of the school population; provide additional services; develop curriculum; and disseminate information. Dr. Michael Gioia, Superintendent of Schools, submitted a formal proposal to the Office of Program Development of New Jersey State Department of Education requesting a government grant that would facilitate the performance of these services. Mrs. Vera Thompson, Director of Funded Programs, wrote the proposal with the assistance of a writing team from Dale Avenue School, Model Cities consultants, the staff of New Jersey Urban Schools Development Council and Mr. Joseph Heitzman, Assistant Director of Funded Programs. The Title III Dale Avenue Urban Early Childhood Education Project received the grant for 1970-71 for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten curriculum development based on Performance Objectives. Hopefully, the grant will be continued in 1971-72 for first grade and in 1972-73 for second and third grade.

GENERAL NEEDS

It is the purpose of the Title III Dale Avenue Urban Early Childhood Education Project to (1) assist the professional staff of the Dale Avenue School and the community served by it; (2) utilize the school to it's maximum potential as a laboratory with up-to-date equipment; (3) train staff in the development and use of materials, curriculum development, research and evaluation capabilities, teaching techniques and classification of student needs; (4) assess the diverse needs of an integrated urban school population; (5) develop educational programs to meet those needs; (6) improve the academic performance and capabilities of students from disadvantaged environments; (7) develop appropriate evaluative techniques that support student programming, practical research and project evaluation; (8) involve parents in the activities of the children and school through special programs and training that will result in the active participation of parents in the reinforcement of the educational process; (9) establish a program for the dissemination of information to the parents, educators and community; (10) expand supplementary services (medical, educational and social), as needed, to insure that each child is physically, educationally and socially capable of benefiting from the learning experiences provided for him in the Dale Avenue School.

SPECIFIC NEEDS
(Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten)

The specific educational needs of the project for the 1970-71 school year are to

(1) produce an assessment system (Performance Objectives) that will affectively assess and measure student progress initially and periodically so that changes in student performance are attributed to the educational design of the program; (2) develop a record for each child to record on-going progress and performance; (3) develop programs in bilingual and multicultural education; (4) compare the pre and post vocabulary scores, identity and body parts and skill assessment scores of pre-kindergarten children at Dale Avenue School with pre-kindergarten and kindergarten age children not at Dale Avenue; (5) show the incorrect responses in vocabulary, identity and body parts and skill assessment of both groups in order to determine in what areas they are lacking skills; (6) indicate the areas in which they show marked differences and similarities; (7) define the cognitive, physical and behavioral needs of the students in the project; (8) produce an effective curriculum which will provide varying rates of progress for a variety of students.

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Culturally disadvantaged. The most striking feature of the inner city culturally disadvantaged is that they are poor. Their yearly incomes are generally around $5,000. Many come from broken homes and live in densely populated areas in substandard housing. Culturally disadvantaged children live in a world that is dominantly physically rather than ideationally and verbally controlled. They lack early experiences of an educationally stimulating nature.(1) Children from

culturally disadvantaged homes often do poorly in school for the following reasons. (II)

1. The lack of an educational tradition in the home.
2. The lack of books, toys and games in the home.
3. Insufficient standard English language.
4. Inadequate motivation to pursue a long-range educational career.
5. Inadequate self image.
6. Poor health, improper diet, frequent moving and noise.

Culturally advantaged. Most of the culturally advantaged children come from so called middle-class homes where the average yearly incomes are generally over $8,000. They live in less populated areas than the disadvantaged and there are less people per apartment or house. In these middle-class homes communication is carefully nurtured. Children are encouraged to speak in words, phrases and complete sentences. They have a repertoire of nursery rhymes, poems, stories and songs which have been taught by rote. There are many books, toys and games in their homes. Their curiosity is cultivated and questions are answered by parents. They learn to talk freely with parents, siblings, other children, relatives, neighbors, shopkeepers and friends of parents. (III)

Title I E.S.E.A. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is the largest single Federal Aid to Education program affecting elementary and secondary schools and is designed to provide financial assistance to schools serving areas with large concentrations of children from low-income families. It's

purpose is to provide supplementary programs tailored to meet one or more of the educational needs of educationally deprived children in the project area.

Title III E.S.E.A. The Title III Program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, called PACE (Projects to Advance Creativity in Education) is designed to encourage school districts to develop imaginative solutions to educational problems; to more effectively utilize research findings; and to create, design and make intelligent use of supplementary centers and services. PACE seeks to (1) encourage the development of innovations in educational practice through exemplary programs, (3) supplement existing programs and facilities.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRE-KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

One hundred and twenty pre-kindergarten children at Dale Avenue School (whose chronological ages at pre-test time averaged four years and three months) form one part of the experimental group in the Title III study. The children are in eight classes which are labeled Pre-kindergarten I,II,III and IV A.M. and Pre-kindergarten I,II,III and IV P.M. Each class has one teacher and two teacher aides. There are fifteen children per class and the same teachers and aides teach both the A.M. and P.M. classes.

Sixty-one percent of the children come from Title I school areas and are bussed to Dale Avenue School five days a week. They attend either the A.M. or P.M. session. The

children, who come in the morning, eat lunch at school and are then bussed home. The children, who come in the afternoon, have lunch soon after their arrival and are bussed home at around three o'clock.

Thirty-one percent of the one hundred and twenty pre-kindergarten children come from families where the parents are separated. Five percent come from families where the parents are divorced and four percent where the mothers are unmarried. The average family income is around $5,000. per year. Twenty-eight percent of the families receive some welfare.

The fathers occupations are varied. They include macnine operators, salesmen, assemblers, key punch operators, electronics workers, patrolmen, platform operators, factory workers, mechanics, laborers, private detectives, truck drivers, box strippers, warehouse workers, firemen, green keepers, pressers, clerks, electricians, hospital orderlies, garment cutters, musicians, mailmen, dye casters, printers, teachers, sheet metal workers, carpenters, special service coordinators, bus drivers, machinists, dental technicians, maintenance men, shoe makers, welders and repair men.

The mothers' occupations include hair stylists, diet aides, waitresses, nurses, students, packers, meter maids, factory workers and housewives.

Forty-four percent of the one hundred and twenty pre-kindergarten children are Black, twenty percent are White, twenty-one percent are Puerto Rican and fifteen percent are Columbian, Chilean, Costa Rican and Chinese. Fifty-three percent are boys and forty-seven percent are girls.

Thirteen percent of the one hundred

Differentiated Staffing Provides
Effective One-To-One Relationships

and twenty children in the study are repeating pre-kindergarten. They were retained because it had been decided by their teachers, the psychologist and the director and assistant director of pre-kindergarten that this would be beneficial to them.

RESULTS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT

(Pre-kindergarten Experimental Group)

As a result of observation and assessment of the three pre-tests that were administered to the one hundred and twenty pre-kindergarten children at Dale Avenue School, the following student needs (weaknessess) and capabilities (strengths) were discovered:

NEEDS - PEABODY A

1. When an action is applied to a picture thirty-one percent of the children failed to see the relationship. (ex. "picking", "sewing", "pouring", and "yawning")

2. Seventy-nine percent of the children had a very limited standard English vocabulary. Thirty percent gave incorrect responses to stimulus words because stories, nursery rhymes and poems had not been read to them. (ex. "coach", "caboose")

3. Thirty-eight percent of the children did not know vocabulary words whose referrents are rare in low income homes, such as words that describe and explain or words that have to do with rural living. (ex. "yawning", "bush", and "nest")

4. Fifty percent of the children had dif-

ficulty remembering to look at each of the four pictures on the page before selecting the picture that represented the stimulus word.

5. The test helped to identify children with perceptual problems as well as problems of personality that have to do with cognition. Thirty-five percent of the children exhibited problems in auditory and visual perception or acuity, withdrawal or hyperactivity, distractability, disinhibition, inappropriate responses, perseveration or negativism.

6. Twenty-five percent of the Spanish speaking children came to school knowing little or no English. Although many had learned to communicate in English and were able to score on the Peabody A test, their scores, of course, were very low. (We administered the test in Spanish to the children who were not able to score on the English version and found that they did just as poorly on the Spanish version.) These children need a special bi-lingual language development program.

7. The mean I.Q. for the one hundred and twenty pre-kindergarten children at Dale Avenue School was 79. The extrapolated scores for many of the Spanish-speaking children, who were testable, were included in this score. This figure was, therefore, lower than the I.Q. of 8[illegible] which has been listed in the literature as the average I.Q. score for the culturally disadvantaged. The teaching of vocabulary, listening, following directions, language development and stimulation (and an understanding of the English language structure) will, hopefully, raise this mean I.Q.

Building Better Math and
Perceptual Skills

by at least ten to fifteen points.

8. One fourth or more of the pre-kindergarten children gave incorrect responses to the following words:

word	no. of incorrect responses
tying	39
bush	45
pouring	41
sewing	34
wiener	71
arrow	34
nest	60
caboose	31
envelope	44
picking	33
badge	62
goggles	33
coach	38
freckle	30
yawning	31

CAPABILITIES - PEABODY A

1. The children were fairly good at recognizing pictures that represented concrete objects. They did recognize action words that had to do with childhood play such as "catching".

2. The children were extremely attentive and cooperative. They sat for about one half hour (for the administration of three tests) and seemed to enjoy the testing situation.

3. Almost all of the children understood or could be taught the concept of pointing to a picture.

4. Rapport was gained very easily with the majority of the children.

5. The children needed very little praise or encouragement.

6. The speech of ninety percent of the children was intelligible. (Other than the Spanish speaking children) Whenever a child's speech was noticeably unintelligible a referral was made to the speech therapist for follow-up.

7. All of the children could see the pictures at between six and eight inches.

8. When it was apparent that the children didn't know certain words and they were asked to guess, the majority did so.

NEEDS - IDENTITY AND BODY PARTS

1. Sixty-one percent of the children did not know their names when they entered the program in September. By November (when they were tested on this) ninety-six percent of the children did know their names.

2. Ninety-six percent of the children gave the name of the street when they were asked, "Where do you live?" Some told the examiner the house number. Very few included the city and the state.

3. Forty-five percent of the children held up the proper number of fingers when they were asked, "How old are you?" but could not assign the number to the number of fingers indicated.

4. Fifty-four percent of the children did not know the labels for eyebrows;

Science Concepts Are Developed
at Pre-Kindergarten and
Kindergarten Levels

seventy-nine percent didn't know eyelashes; ninety percent didn't know wrist; eighty percent didn't know ankle and fifty percent didn't know elbow.

5. Ten percent of the children know how many fingers they had on both hands. Thirty-two percent of the children know how many fingers they had on one hand.

6. Ninety percent of the children didn't understand the concepts of Miss, Mrs. and Mr. and used them inappropriately. A married teacher was sometimes called Miss and at other times Mr. (The children knew that a title came before the name, but they did not know which title to use.)

CAPABILITIES - IDENTITY AND BODY PARTS

1. Eighty-eight percent of the children have learned the number of the bus they ride on. (This was given number one priority in the skills they had to learn.)

2. Sixty-two percent of the children did know something about twoness. They learned since entering school in September (or already knew) that they have two eyes, two arms, two feet, etc.

3. Seventy-eight percent of the children knew the name of their head teacher. Ninety-six percent knew the name of at least one teacher. (They have three per class - a teacher and two teacher aides.)

NEEDS - SKILL ASSESSMENT

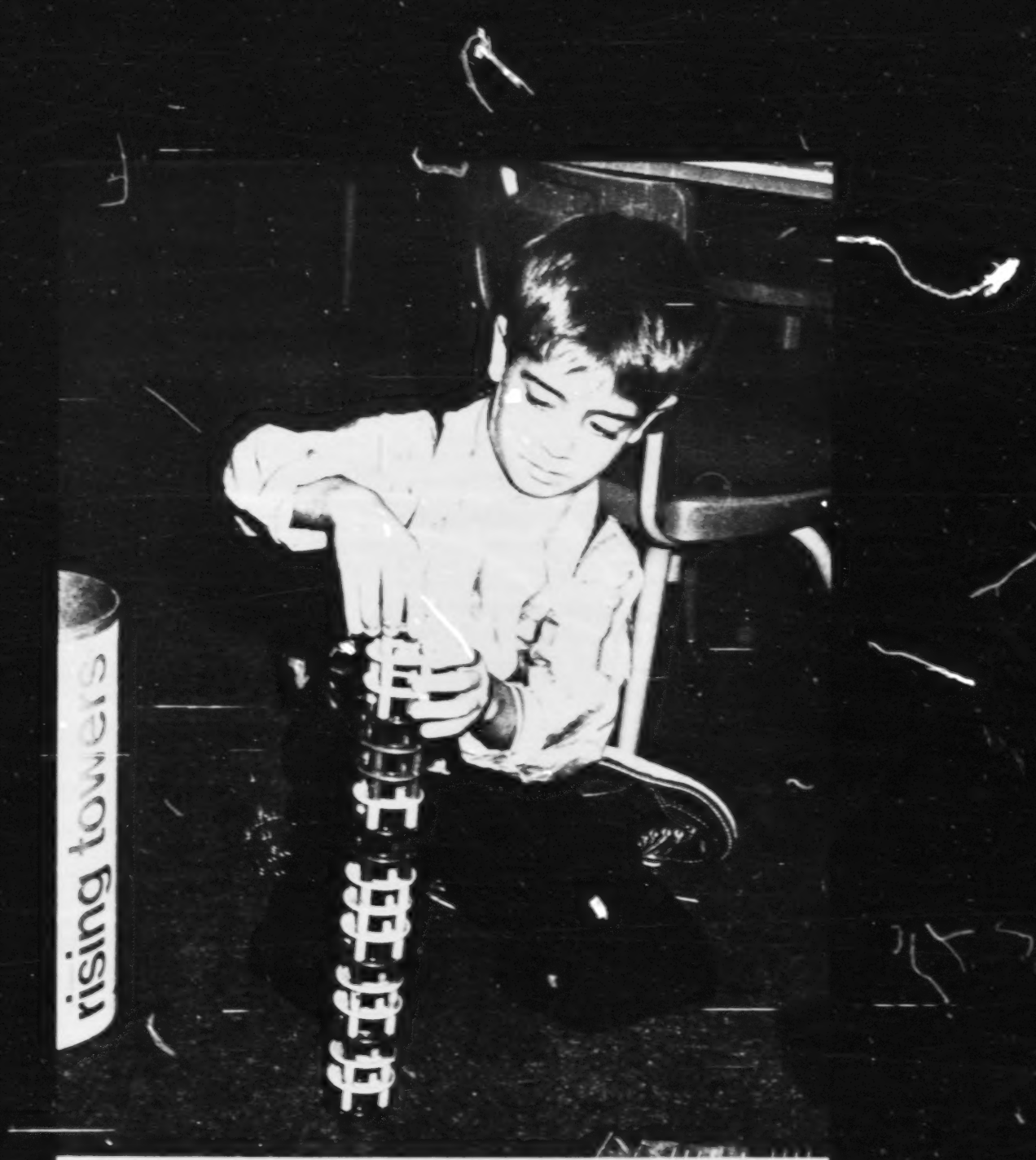
1. Although fifty-seven percent of the children were aware of, and could name, shapes (ex. round shape, window, Indian house) fifteen percent of them did not know the geometric term for circle; twenty-two percent did not know the term square and three percent of them did not know the term triangle.

2. Less than one percent of the pre-kindergarten children knew their birthday or the month of their birthday.

3. Eighty-eight percent of the children did not recognize or identify numerals 2 through 10. Fifty percent of them recognized numeral I. Fourteen percent mixed up letters and numbers.

4. The children could tell that there was one object when the examiner asked, "How many objects do you see?" However, they did not do so well in counting objects in groups of two, three and four or in seeing the whole group and knowing how many there were without having to count each one.

5. Seventy-nine percent of the pre-kindergarten children had difficulty in explaining likenessess and differences. This was partly due to lack of understanding the concept and possibly also due to their lack of understanding the standard English language structure used by the examiner. The children need to learn the concepts of "and", "either", "or", "not", polar opposites, and categorizing. Sixty-three percent of the children dropped the verb when the examiner asked, "Why are these the



Building Towers Strengthens
the Child's Skills In the
Areas of Cognition

same?" and when shown three like red circles, they answered, "balls red". The most common answer given was "red - red - red". (Dr. Roger Brown, of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Harvard, calls this type of language "telegraphese". He believes that this results from a limited programming ability.(IV) The Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, believes that instruction can change a child's verbal development.(V) We at Dale Avenue School believe it also.)

CAPABILITIES - SKILL ASSESSMENT

1. Rote counting was an area where the Spanish-speaking children had success. They seemed to have less difficulty learning this skill than they did learning vocabulary and language structure. (This skill can be used to teach the counting of objects.)

2. Fifty percent of the children knew the names of the colors.

3. Fifty-six percent of the children could count from one to ten.

4. Seventy percent of the children could see likenesses and fifty percent of them could see differences.

The Pre-kindergarten teachers at Dale Avenue School have been apprised of the testing results and the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils.

Through the knowledge that teachers have gained from workshops held at the school in "Perceptual Training", "Language Development", "Audiology", resource materi-

als, training films and sessions with the Title III staff members plus their own knowledge and creativity, they will develop the capability to deal with the individual needs of each pupil. It is expected that the teachers will help each pupil to move at his own rate from skill to skill. As a result, children will feel successful and enjoy their learning experiences.

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